

Unfolding Unveiling: Studies of Christ Revealed in the Types of Joshua, David, and Solomon

Part Five: Saul

Chapter Thirteen: Saul as King

Saul a Manifestation of Israel's Heart Condition

When Saul is anointed king, we are still in the time period of the Judges even though we are no longer studying the book of Judges. Samuel is still alive. The people are living among the inhabitants during Saul's reign, and they are worshipping idols. There is no record of Saul doing either of these. Saul was actually doing better than most of the Israelites because he remained separate from the inhabitants of the Land and was not worshipping their idols. His appearance seemed to be that of a good Israelite. Nevertheless, his reign came to a dismal end because he was out of step with the Lord.

Was Saul really that bad of a king to deserve the rejection of the Lord? To truly understand Saul's reign from the Lord's point of view, we must understand the reason why the Lord gave Saul to Israel as their king: because he was a manifestation and an adequate representation of the spiritual state of Israel at that time. According to the book of Judges, everyone was doing that which was right in his own eyes. The ark of the covenant had been taken out of the Holy of Holies and was sitting in someone's house. Israel was constantly being beat up by their enemies, and all they could do about it was cry out to the Lord every once in a while when life became unbearable. Other than that, Israel pretty much did what they felt like doing.

This is why when Israel asked for a king, God gave them what was already ruling them. He gave them one person that reflected who and what they were: someone who did that which was right in his own eyes. There is a good reason why He did that, and we will see later that it was a very wise move on His part to give them one head of all that He disliked and rejected. In doing so, God did not have to deal with every individual problem and try to fix each them. He could just deal with one head and take care of everything, which is the mercy of God.

With the ark in Abinadab's home, spiritual life in Israel was out of order. Saul reigning as king was a manifestation of that fact. Saul as a good looking and strong man was what man wanted, not what God intended (cf. I Sam. 8:5-7). As long as we go by the seeing of the eye – what looks good – the ark will be off to the side somewhere, not in the center like it is supposed to be. The priests attending the ark will not be of the proper order, either (cf. I Sam. 7:1).

When the heart is far from the Lord, the ark will not have its rightful place because other things are allowed to be at the center. Not only that, but the rightful king will be hiding in caves instead of sitting on the throne. Whenever the soul is on top, the ark will be to the side.

As we study Saul's kingdom, notice that the ark of the covenant is never mentioned. This will be of importance to us at a later time.

Saul/Self-life and David/Spirit of Christ

Saul is a type of the soul with an unrenewed mind and the self-life working through it, and David is a type of the Spirit of Christ. We can see these two at odds with each other all the way through the book of I Samuel.

Saul does not seem like a bad guy unless you compare him to David. Just by himself, even according to the Scriptures, he was a very capable and able man. He was a good man, a man whom Israel looked up to, and they wanted to follow him. He seemed to be a person who could stand out in front of everybody and lead. He was not a criminal or an evil person. He was a good person, but a good person who had his motivations coming from the wrong place and who did not understand the priorities in the Lord's economy.

As we begin to move into our study of Saul, note that he will regularly be placed along side David for the sake of contrast. This is because Saul does not look like such a bad king until you compare him to David. In much the same way, we do not look very selfish until the Holy Spirit begins to contrast us to Christ. The carnal Christian, if left to himself, will live a normal, good life. But if he is confronted with Christ, the worst will come out of him. The soul that is controlled by the self-life will always look horrible compared to Jesus. The story of Saul and David lays this out for us beautifully.

There are passages of Scripture which indicate that Saul's rule diverged from the Lord, but we will not notice it unless we compare the passages in I Samuel that record Saul's reign with those passages that record David's reign. We can then see how David proceeded differently from Saul. In comparing the two, we will realize how at odds with the Lord Saul was in every aspect of his rule.

When we think of that which is at odds with our precious Lord, a list of base sins comes to mind: drunkenness, sexual sin, and murder, to name a few. But the sins of self are far more subtle than this and much less easily detected by the carnal Christian. Please remember that Saul was not a sinner. He was not like other Israelites at that time, who worshipped idols, or made alliances with the inhabitants of the Land (cf. I Sam. 7:14; 14:21; 15:6, which corroborates Jud. 3:5-7.). He was a good person. He was humble, at least initially (cf. I Sam. 10:21-23), and he was able to flow with the Lord in spiritual gifts (cf. I Sam. 10:9-13), even when not flowing properly with the Lord (cf. I Sam. 19:24).

Saul's downfall was not any of the terrible sins mentioned above. Instead, he, like any other carnal soul, thought individually (see section titled, "Saul's many battles to David's one battle"). He did not know the One God or His ways. This is why Saul's utter failure before God cannot be seen for what it is apart from seeing Christ. You can never see the wretchedness of what God rejects the way God sees it unless you see His Son. And then you see what He rejects in light of His Son.

Kings in Conflict

It is no coincidence that the conflict between the soul/self-life and the spirit of Christ is pictured by two kings in conflict. One is a king that was set up by God but ultimately rejected as the governor of his people, and the other a king that proceeded out from the nature of God Himself, a king who rules as the son of his Father. These are two governments that are founded on differences so deep that they can never make peace with one another. Each of the two governments is seen in the picture of a king. To study these kings in this light will enable us to see more clearly the nature of God and the nature of the self-life.

One of the main contrasts between the natures of Saul and David that was noted in the previous chapter is how one takes for himself while the other allows man to come to him of their own free will. Samuel warned the people in I Samuel 8:10-18 that the manner of the king who would reign over them would take the people and possessions of Israel for himself. This way would be his mindset. He would judge after the seeing of the eye, and anything that looked like it might be an advantage to him, he would take for himself to bolster his own kingdom (cf. I Sam. 14:52, 16:17-19, 18:2). We have studied this quality of the self-life already.

David, however, was different from Saul. After he was anointed king, he never tried to establish a kingdom. I Samuel 22:1-2 says that people gathered unto him voluntarily. And the people who gathered to him were not of the best sort. As a matter of fact, they were the exact kind that Saul would not take to build his own kingdom. Saul took the swift, the strong, the intelligent, the talented, the mighty. Those who came to David were the outcasts of society. Those who saw their lack drew near unto David. The Scriptures say that those who were distressed, in debt, or discontented gathered themselves to David. In man's estimation, these are hardly the beginnings of a kingdom that is supposed to last a long time. This is just like Jesus, who does not take for Himself. Instead, He allows us to come to Him. He does not use what looks good to the human eye. Instead, He builds His kingdom on outcasts.

Saul is like our own unrenewed mind. We want to bolster our kingdom. We want to pad our nest, we want to make ourselves look good. We want to be secure, and we want to be on top. This is the nature of Saul's kingdom. Saul – the self-life – is afraid to lose what he perceives to be his if it is something that keeps him in that secure place of being on top and looking good (cf. I Sam. 15:30 for looking good and I Sam. 18:8 for being on top). It is a seeking-to-save mentality that is the same root for the characteristics described in I

Samuel 8:10-18. To gather to oneself for one's own purposes is the same as being afraid to lose it. All of it comes from self being in the center.

Saul was afraid of losing his position. Kings always feel threatened by governments other than their own (see Herod's reaction to the birth of King Jesus in Matt. 2:1-13), and Saul was no exception. This was brought out to its fullest manifestation when he realized that David was to be his replacement. The self-life will never let go of wanting to be the boss. It will fight to the end and never repent. Saul never turned. He died in the same state that caused God to reject him in the first place.

Saul's seeking-to-save becomes most evident in relation to David being given the kingdom in I Samuel 18:8-11. This is the first time Saul manifested his true nature toward the new king. He was afraid of losing his kingdom. This fear of loss caused him to be envious of David and eventually try to kill him. This is the beginning of Saul's determination to try to save his own kingdom by eliminating David. This seeking-to-save attitude took him so far away from the Lord that he tried to kill David (1) by his own hand (cf. I Sam. 18:11, 19:9-10), (2) by orchestrating circumstances to ensure David's demise, and (3) by hunting him down with his armies (cf. I Sam. chs. 23-24, 26-27). This self-preserving mentality warped his perception, causing him to believe that everyone was against him (cf. I Sam. 20:30-32; 22:8), and therefore degraded himself to the point that he found it acceptable to consult a medium (cf. I Sam. 28:7).

Saul: David's Enemy

Because Saul knew that David was the rightful king, and because Saul saw that the Lord was with David, Saul was afraid of losing the kingdom. He became David's enemy (cf. I Sam. 18:28) because he saw David as a threat. It goes without saying, of course, that David would not have been a threat to Saul had he not taken the kingdom for himself in I Samuel 14:47. Our soul is the same way. When the soul is ruled by the self-life, it perceives Jesus to be a threat because self wants to stay on the throne. He does not want the Spirit of Christ to rule because then self would lose everything.

Not only does the soul become Jesus' enemy, it also perceives Jesus to be its enemy (cf. I Sam. 19:17). To make yourself an enemy is different than someone else being an enemy to you. If you make yourself an enemy, it is because you are offended. Saul was offended at David in I Samuel 18:29, but I Samuel 19:17 says that Saul considered David to be his enemy. This means that Saul thought that David hated him. He perceived incorrectly because David never had offensive thoughts against Saul, and it was his wrong attitude that deceived him.

I Samuel 28:16 says that the Lord was Saul's enemy and that this occurred before Saul made himself David's enemy. Most likely, the reason why the Lord became Saul's enemy was the same reason that Saul was David's enemy. It was the same nature and attitude inside of Saul that cut him off from the Lord that also made him hate David.

Saul and David at War: Self versus the Spirit of Christ

To say that Saul and David were constantly at war with each other is not an entirely accurate statement. It would be much more correct to say that Saul was at war with David, for it was Saul who was trying to vanquish David. David, on the other hand, never fought Saul once. He ran, he hid, and he left the country. Even though David was “cursed”, he still blessed his enemies. He honored Saul when he was delivered into David’s own hands. And David delivered the Israelites from the Philistines, and those very same Israelites tried to hand David over to Saul (cf. I Sam 23 & 25). The Spirit of Christ is a lamb who never defends itself but only blesses. David exhibited this very Spirit. The self-life fights to preserve, but the Spirit of Christ never will.

The carnal mind believes that if these two forces were locked in combat, the self-life would have the easy victory, for the mightiest force must logically overcome the weaker one. Indeed, the picture of David hiding in caves in the wilderness with Saul in hot pursuit of his life that is so vividly laid out for us in the Scriptures seem to say this very thing. For one reading this story for the first time, it looks as though Saul’s victory is imminent.

This is what the self-life does to the Spirit of Christ. In the interest of control, power, and government, King Self drives Christ to the very borders of our existence. If self is on the throne, you can be sure that it will share with no one. And the Spirit of Christ – never resisting, always yielding – will not fight to assume the place in the believer that is already His. He will allow himself to be chased, persecuted, and confined to severe limitation that seems to wipe out all that He is and even the very reason for his existence. This is the picture we see of David hiding in the caves. It is Christ, displaced by the self-life, limited in manifestation to a point that makes him unrecognizable, and at the farthest possible point from the ministry to which he has been called. And yet the Spirit of Christ will not lift a finger to bring about a turn in the circumstances.

While David was in hiding, he never ceased being who he was. The anointing of king was not withdrawn from him. But who he was – a type of the nature of Christ – manifested in other ways, even though the kingdom was being “stolen” from him on a daily basis. He blessed Nabal’s shepherds, he delivered the town of Keilah, and he honored Saul. The Spirit of Christ will be the Spirit of Christ wherever it is. It was only the manifestation of who David was that was limited, not who he actually was.

Regardless, it is important to realize that Saul did limit David. When the self-life is on the throne of our hearts, Christ will not be. We are God’s covenant people. He is supposed to be preeminent in our hearts. David represents the Resurrected One in Whom we are gathered. This One is supposed to reign in our hearts. This One should have all of our love, attention and complete submission. If this One does not sit on the throne in the heart of a Christian, then King Self does.

Saul versus David: The Place of Government

Another point further supporting Saul's representation of the self-life is that Saul did nothing to bring the ark back to its proper place in Israel. If the Scriptures give us any insight, then the thought never even crossed his mind. Self's primary interests blind us to God's interests. Saul was too busy taking the kingdom to consider that God might have an agenda. We have three symptoms during Saul's reign that point to a people out of order:

- 1) The ark was not in its rightful place.
- 2) The true king was rejected and living in the outskirts and caves of the Land.
- 3) Saul ruled from his hometown.

The first two points we have mentioned, but the last point bears some significance and is worth discussing. At the time of Saul's reign, there was no holy city, no city of God. This was permissible for that time, for Israel's history in the historical books reveals a progression in the Lord. The time for possessing the Land was not the time for a holy city (cf. Ex. 15:17). The progression of revelation that God has in mind for His people does not require us to apprehend everything at once. What is significant here is not the absence of a holy city, but that it never crossed Saul's mind that there should be one. He was content to reign from his hometown. It almost seems as though Saul made Gibeah the capital city of Israel, but that would be a false statement since the need for a capital city never occurred to him. That he ruled from his own city is simply a manifestation of where he abode and identified. He lived and identified in the place of his birth. This is how we as carnal Christians live. When we who are born again live in the sin, selfishness, and mindset in which we are born; when self rules and governs by its mindset and viewpoint; then we are allowing Saul to reign over that which is now spiritual in nature and finds its origin and dwelling place in the heavens above.

God's people are a spiritual people. Though we are born in the flesh and all that we are is shaped and molded by the natural realm, though the natural realm was the place of our birth and our home, when we are born again, this is no longer the case. To continue to be governed by the carnal, temporal realm when it is no longer the place of our birth or our home is a profound violation of God's intentions and a serious sin, more serious perhaps than the base sins of which an unbeliever is capable. Indeed, to be born into the spirit realm gives us the capability of sins far more serious in nature. Unbelievers live in a state of sin. They are dead in sin and therefore cannot betray God. How can you betray someone if you do not believe He exists, or have never professed allegiance to Him? Betrayal comes about only when the one has the trust of the other. This is the case with us. We have been entrusted with a new life, home, and identity which we have the ability to betray when we allow ourselves to be governed by that which is of a lower, rejected realm and system of government. Saul did just this. He did not have the heart or the mind to forsake his birthplace for the heavenlies, and self never will. The self-life finds its beginning in the natural creation, not the spiritual creation. It draws its strength, knowledge, and life from that place. Self has no place in the heavenlies, since the only One who appears there is Christ.

Let us contrast Saul with David, who did not rule from the place of his birth (though he might have, had he not spent a good many years in God's wilderness training school, a time period that we will study in a future chapter). Instead, he took a stronghold in the mountains, drove out the inhabitants, and reigned over all of Israel from that place. Remember, David reigned in Hebron over Judah for seven years after Saul was killed. It was while David was reigning in Hebron that the rest of Israel recognized him to be who he really was: the king over the entire nation (II Sam. 5:1-5). His very first act as king was to take Jerusalem and make it the city of the king. David did not identify with his home and birthplace like Saul. He was entirely wrapped up in the interests of God, who desired that all be gathered in One. That God's people were now gathered up into David was manifested by the city of God coming into being for the very first time. A pattern, then, begins to emerge: Joshua represents a view of Christ that causes us to possess Him, which is illustrated in Israel taking the Land. Seeing Christ as David will result in being gathered in Christ, and we see the city of Jerusalem emerge into prominence. When Solomon is revealed, God's people are built together in Christ, which is represented by the building of the temple for God's habitation.

The Seat of Government

When David was living with the Philistines, he continued to possess the Land on Israel's behalf, based on the Word of the Lord. He was being who he was even though no one supported him. If the children of Israel had come up under David, they could have come into so much more of their possession so much sooner. But they were under Saul, fighting Saul's battles instead of the Lord's battles. David, however, was fighting the Lord's battles (cf. I Sam. 25:28). Jesus continues to be Who He Is, the One who possesses the Land, whether we gather in Him or stay in our individual mentality. He will possess the Land, but are we with Him? If we are under Saul, we are not with Christ. Nevertheless, the people did reap the benefits of David's battles.

According to I Samuel 28:17, the kingdom did not belong to Saul, but to David. David wrought consistent victories against the enemies of the Lord because he was king. But God was no longer speaking to Saul (cf. I Sam. 28:6) because He did not recognize him as king. God was, however, speaking to David (cf. I Sam. 23:2, 9-12).

As has been discussed, one of the ways we can tell that Israel is not where he is supposed to be spiritually is by the location of the ark of the covenant. At this time, it is sitting in a man's house instead of in the tabernacle where it belonged. That the true King, David, is hiding in caves while Saul, the rejected king, is seeking his life is another symptom of the spiritual state of Israel. The final clue that Israel is off from the Lord is Saul's place of government.

The city from which Saul ruled would not matter if we did not know anything about David. David never ruled from Bethlehem, the place of his birth. He ruled from Hebron, and he ruled from Jerusalem. In contrast, Saul never left Gibeah, and he established his throne there. As a member of the tribe of Benjamin, this city was his rightful inheritance. This point could be overlooked had not David taken great pains to take Jerusalem – one

of the most fortified strongholds in Israel – from the inhabitants and rule from that place. What a contrast. Why does this matter? Saul governed from the place of his natural birth, which is a reflection of the self-life governing from its roots. David, however, governs from the city of God, which government manifests as we begin to see Christ as David.

We have a tendency to take everything that we are from the natural realm and set it up to govern our life in Christ. This is not right, however, since we are no longer of this earth because of the new birth. We are now a new creation in Christ, where old things are passed away. We are not of the natural realm anymore. When we – those who are out from the heart of the Father – take a king who governs by personal, fleshly agenda, when we take his motives, how he gathers information, and make him king over the new creation, we commit a serious error.

We are not supposed to have any ties to this earth. We are not supposed to have prejudices or preferences directed at others. The self-life always looks down on others and thinks it is superior. All of this is done away under David, but the self-life as personified in Saul rules from this place, judging after the flesh, after the seeing of the eye, after preferences and prejudices, ruling by personality traits. If we are outspoken, then we think that being a spiritual Christian means speaking deep truths all the time. If someone is a practical person, then the only true ministry is hands-on practical ministry. We are ruled by that which is grounded in the earth, instead of being ruled by Him who is revealed. We allow these natural things to govern over that which is spiritual, and it causes lots of problems.

Viewing God's people by our own personalities and tendencies and governing God's people from that place is a crime in the kingdom of heaven because it violates our very source. We deny what He made us. In the Father's heart, what rules over us is important. He can take care of any fleshly sin. But if a person does not identify from his new beginning in Christ, there is no connection to Christ as our government. The relationship is more precious in God's eyes than the action. To violate the relationship, then, as Saul did is more serious than violating a moral code.

To the carnal mindset, the moral code is everything. The minute someone fails, the carnal mind judges that person as failure. But those very ones can be consistently violating the nature of Christ, and it never crosses their minds that this is displeasing to God. The Pharisees are a perfect example of this. The Pharisees were not bad people. The Pharisees did not break the commandments. That is why they were such a formidable force against Jesus. They had so much sway because they were so good. But they maintained their high moral code and succeeded in nailing Jesus to the Cross at the same time.

This is where we see Christ's departure from just being good. He supersedes goodness. In God's priorities, there are things that grieve Him more deeply than others. We judge people by fleshly sins, and think that they are less than we. But if you are spiritually minded, you no longer judge by the natural realm. You do not judge by the words that come out of peoples' mouths, or by their actions. You judge others by Jesus' work at the Cross. We are to know no man after the flesh. This is when we start being governed.

Knowing no man after the flesh is government because it changes how we behave toward others.

When you see things from your own opinion and your own point of view, that is being governed by the self-life. This is what Saul did when he ruled from the place of his first birth. In Christ, in the new creation, we can only judge and view others by the Cross. It is the only tool we have. There is no other way to see others in Christ.

Summary

Even if you are a “good Christian”, if self is still on the throne, then you have the same potential for falling from the Lord’s intentions as Saul did. Self can look good, but it has so many deceitful motivations that when backed into a corner, all of its ugliness will come to the forefront. When not backed into a corner, self will continue to gather the best unto himself. Self will always hear God’s word by the knowledge of good and evil; it can never be any other way. And because self will not obey God’s commands (cf. I Sam. 15:26), God cannot accept its kingdom.

Self will always be at war with Christ. They will never be friends, they will never get along, they will never work together. Self can only think of itself. It can only see from the point of view of self being in the center. By virtue of what it is, it will only consider itself as an individual, as separate from everyone else. It cannot even consider Christ the One, that we are hidden in Him, and that we are members of the body of which He is the Head. Anything that is One or corporate – indeed, anything concerning the nature of God – is incomprehensible to the self-life. Self will always reject God’s elect, which is Christ, as Saul rejected David as his successor. Self chooses itself instead. Self does not want anyone to be king except itself. Self does not want to be crucified and then buried forever. In the kingdom of God’s dear Son, however, only the Son can be seen. We are all hidden, and there is no self there. Self and its separate mentality will always feel threatened by the resurrected One. Self will never allow Christ to rule, even after it has been stripped of its position (cf. I Sam. 15:26-28). It will continue to sit on the throne until it is dead (cf. I Sam. 31:2).

This is as true in the hearts of believers today as it was with Saul’s kingdom thousands of years ago. Self in our hearts will continue to usurp the throne that rightfully belongs to Christ until it is dead. This seems to be such an extreme picture to apply to us Christians today. We would never do that to Jesus, would we? Of course we would. We do it every time we choose an individual, seek-to-save mentality. Saul reigns on the throne over whom he has no right to reign. He has been utterly rejected. God will not even speak to him (cf. I Sam. 15:35)! But we allow the self-life to persecute Christ by seeking to save every day. How sad. What a great sin it must be in God’s eyes for His people to continue under a king whom He has rejected and to whom He will not even speak.

Saul spent the last part of his reign chasing down David. It was his government. But in two solitary moments of what looked like sanity, Saul seemed to show a real love for David (cf. I Sam. 24:16, 26:17, 21-25). The self-life always “loves” the Lord when He

rewards its evil with good. Do not be deceived into thinking that because you have feelings when the Lord rewards your evil with good, that the self-life loves the Lord. Our feelings cannot reverse the government of our hearts.

David never took the throne by his own hand. He did nothing to change the fact that Saul took the kingdom (cf. I Sam. 14:47). David did not reign until after Saul was dead. It is also interesting to note that Saul died in battle (cf. I Sam. 31:1-6). Saul fought constantly. Self strives constantly, but the Spirit of Christ does not strive. It waits patiently for the right time and does not put its hand to anything. Even though Jesus has the right to the throne, He will not – indeed, where comprehension is concerned, cannot – take the throne until self is dead. Again, Jesus is already King over God's people, but He does not manifest as king in our hearts on a daily basis if self is alive, for as long as self is alive, it will continue to take the kingdom for itself and continue to take everything else it wants, too. The Spirit of Christ will continue to wait, and after self is no longer on the throne, He will wait until God's people come and anoint Him king (cf. II